



**KING COUNTY AUDITOR'S OFFICE**  
**Follow-up on Sheriff's Office Performance Audits: 2002-2005**

**King County**

This management letter summarizes our follow-up on three performance audits conducted of the King County Sheriff's Office (KCSO): the 2002 audit of the Communications (Comm) Center, and the 2004 and 2005 audits of patrol operations, overtime, strategic planning, the contract cost recovery model, and federal grants management.

The KCSO has taken steps to implement most of the recommendations made in these audits. Other recommendations that require significant changes in business practices are still in progress. The effort of the KCSO to shift its management approach from one that was largely reactive to a more strategic approach is evident in the work that has begun in the areas of patrol staffing and strategic planning.

While progress has been made to strengthen the staffing plans of the Comm Center and patrol, including two recently completed studies, these operations continue to be based on older staffing plans that should be updated to meet contemporary standards. Efforts to improve these staffing plans have been impacted by management and staff turnover, and limits on staff resources and expertise. Results-driven staffing plans are needed for the KCSO to ensure its personnel are managed cost-effectively and that the desired performance and goals are achieved.

The KCSO would benefit from a centralized resource to ensure that the Comm Center and patrol staffing plans are soundly designed, results-oriented, and consistently managed. This audit recommends that the KCSO dedicate a permanent position to manage the agency's staffing plans.

**Communications Center**

The 2002 Comm Center audit was prompted by council concerns over its difficulty meeting call-answering standards for 911 calls, and by Comm Center staff concerns over overtime and workload levels. Our audit found the performance difficulties were caused by a series of operational decisions and management practices in need of updating.

Most of the recommendations have been or are being implemented. Additional personnel were added to cover newly added functions and responsibilities, and staff hiring frequency was increased. The staffing plan has not yet been updated as recommended, although a staffing study was conducted in 2006 that recommended substantial increases in staffing levels.

Following a period of improvement, the Comm Center is again having difficulty meeting the 911 call-answering standard. This standard will be raised in 2008, which will make it more difficult for the Comm Center to meet it, and could place the center at risk of losing up to \$1 million in E-911 excise tax funds.

The Comm Center plans to adjust its staffing plan in 2008, but the amount of new staff needed to meet the new performance standard remains unclear.

**Patrol Staffing**

The 2004 audit evaluated the KCSO's management of patrol staffing and found that its operations were largely focused on reactive response to 911 calls and geographical coverage, rather than on more contemporary results-oriented, community policing practices. We recommended that the KCSO develop

a new patrol staffing plan based on these practices, and on standards for workload and performance.

The KCSO has established a goal to increase the amount of time deputies are available for proactive patrol activities and community policing and has begun integrating more contemporary management practices shown to prevent crime.

However, management has not yet developed a new patrol staffing plan. A 2006 staffing study identified the resources needed to meet community policing goals, but did not comprehensively address the need for performance and workload standards.

**Overtime, Strategic Planning, Federal Grants Management, and Contract Cost Model**

The KCSO has implemented nearly all of the recommendations in these areas. Management of patrol overtime has significantly improved, although overtime tracking could still be strengthened and trends indicate recent increases in overtime use. While the KCSO now has a strategic plan and a nearly complete operational master plan, performance measures development is still in progress.

**Recommendations**

The report recommends that the KCSO dedicate a permanent staff position to manage its staffing plans.

**Sheriff's Response**

The Sheriff concurs with the report recommendation and intends to request an additional FTE in 2008 to support this position.